



The Lost World



👁 177 ✓ 13 ★ 11

Chapter 1 by Rahul

It was 5 in the morning. Little drops of rain were tapping rhythmically on Carlos' face through a crack in the window he left open for fresh air. He was lying in the passenger seat of their 1997 Jeep Wrangler, fast asleep. Samuel was in the driver's seat, awake, intently staring at each and every drop that hit their windshield.

Samuel didn't sleep the whole night. Memories of the accident which left them stranded in the middle of God knows where haunted him. Actually, he knew they were somewhere on Isla Venado - a remote Costa Rican island which was recently abandoned due to news of some peculiar events.

Dr. Samuel Wilde and his students Carlos Sanchez and Mae Lin were researchers and field biologists at Pennsylvania State University. They were attending a conference regarding advancements made on theories surrounding various mass extinctions Earth faced over the last 2.5 billion years. Samuel was particularly interested in, and was considered a renowned expert in the Permian-Triassic extinction event - the Earth's largest mass extinction which wiped away 90% to 96% of all species on the Earth. He had recently written a paper on the event with Carlos and Mae, which is why the three of them were attending the conference in San Miguel, El Salvador. In the middle of his talk, he was pulled off stage on account of a phone call regarding the events on Isla Venado (which he had heard of for the first time). Without a moment of hesitation (despite his skepticism), he packed his bags, asked Carlos and Mae only once if they wanted to come along (he knew they would never say no), and set off. By helicopter the island

was only four hours away.

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When the trip arrived at the island, they were greeted by Dr. Frederick Islington. Islington (everyone called him Izzy) was the one who called him a couple of hours ago. Had it been anyone else, Samuel would have probably laughed it off.

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They were unimpressed to find just two Jeeps (with a small electric motorbike strapped to the back of one) as their transports for their sudden expedition.

It was nearly dawn when they set off, as the helicopter disappeared into the clouds. Carlos and Mae has no idea what was going on, but knew it best not to ask - Samuel and Islington didn't look too happy about something anyway. Carlos and Samuel were in one vehicle, with Mae and Islington in the other, leading the way through a very rough road. Carlos finally found the courage to ask Samuel what they were doing here, but Samuel shook it off, claiming that he was certain it was all a misunderstanding and they'd be back in San Miguel by tomorrow.

After driving for two hours (they couldn't go faster than about 5 miles per hour due to the rough terrain), something went terribly wrong. Carlos and Samuel saw the tail lights of the Jeep in front of them flail upwards towards the sky, and the entire vehicle nose dive into a crevasse which seemed to close as fast as it opened in front of them. Both of them were left speechless. Stunned. They got out of their car to inspect the area, but couldn't find a trace of the Jeep, Mae, Islington, or the crevasse. They decided to spend the night in the Jeep, and inspect the area again in daylight. Both were left utterly confused, worried about their friends, and frightened.

As Samuel stared at the rain on the windshield, he couldn't help but recollect the events from last night. He was certain he saw something else. Something pulled the Jeep in, it didn't just fall. But what? How could it leave no trace? What did it fall in to? And where is it now?

Carlos wiped the rain off his face as he drowsily said "Hey Doc, ready to have a closer look? I'm really worried about Mae and Izzy ... and you know we need the satellite phones in their car to call the chopper back ... and can you please tell me what on Earth we are doing here now?"

"I thought I knew, but I honestly have no idea now. Anyway, yeah, let's have a look. And check if there are any weapons in the back." commanded Samuel.

Chapter 2 by Henry

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the feeling that something was off here. A rustling in the brush caused him to jump, but it was only Carlos, returning with a machete, shovel, and small tank of propane.

"Did you find anything odd?" Carlos asked.

Samuel shook his head. "It's only odd in its normality. There are no fissures in the earth, no disruptions in the soil."

"So where do we start?"

"There's not much we can do here without more evidence. We'll need to go back into town for help. Start collecting a few soil samples. I'll mark the area. We'll go to the police first, then I'll call the local university and see if they will let us use their lab for a few hours."

Samuel took a can of spray paint from his pack and began marking the perimeter of the incident. He was finishing the last side when he heard Carlos call to him.

Carlos was squatting in front of a pool of mud. "I think I found something." He stood and handed Samuel a hard ivory shard.

Samuel examined the object. "It's a second metacarpal."

"A finger bone?"

"Yes," Samuel said. "Human."

Their eyes met just as they heard a piercing screech.

"What was that?" Carlos said.

"We need to go. Now," Samuel said.

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They ran to the Jeep just

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think it's happening again!" Carlos yelled as he hopped behind the wheel, he went to crank the Jeep, only to realize he didn't have the keys. "Where are the keys?"

"I left them in the ignition! Watch out!" Samuel screamed, pointing in front of the Jeep. The ground began to fracture and was quickly spreading towards them. "Hang on!" he yelled, as they were suddenly surrounded by blackness. Samuel knew they must be falling, but he was certain that it felt like something was pulling them into the abyss.

When he opened his eyes, the first thing he saw was the cracked windshield. But it was the smell of blood that was overwhelming him. He turned and saw Carlos slumped over the steering wheel.

"Carlos. CARLOS," he said, panicked. Carlos moaned and slowly lifted his head. Samuel was surprised to see that although Carlos had a large goose egg on his forehead, he appeared to be fine.

"Are you alright, Doc?" Carlos asked. Samuel touched his own head and winced at the pain. Pulling his hand away, it was sticky with blood. He must have lost some time after the fall, because he didn't remember how he incurred the nasty head wound.

"Yes, I'll be fine. Maybe a little concussed, but nothing fatal."

"Great. So I guess this is what the center of the Earth looks like. It's too cold in here to be hell."

Samuel looked around. "No, I know exactly where we are. This is what I was afraid of. This is the legendary Cursed Cavern of Isla Venado."

Chapter 3 by intellikat



Carlos stifled a laugh. "Madre de Dios, come off it, Doc. Legendary Cursed Cavern of Isla Venado? Maybe if you had shed a few adjectives I would have swallowed that. What are we, in Anaheim? Let me look for Mickey Mouse around the next corner."

"Listen, Carlos. Forget about what the locals call it, and just listen to me. This place is real. And it's very, very dangerous. You don't want to be here. But believe me when I tell you we've found ourselves in a

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"No shit, Doc. And would you stop with all the theatrics already? It aint enough you've probably killed Mae and Dr. Izzy-- practically killed me, too, but you gotta go on and on with this spooky narrator shit? I'm gonna find a way outta here."

Carlos clambered out of the twisted vehicle and dragged a length of rope from the Jeep.

"Is the tank of propane still intact, Carlos?"

"Looks like it."

"Got the shovel?"

"Right here."

"And the machete?"

"Goddamit, Doc. Yes. Everything is still here."

"Good. We will need each and every one of those items to get out of here alive."

"El burro sabe mas que tu...! Maybe you should just-- callate el osico gordota! Man, you are getting on my nerves, Doc."

"I understand your frustration, Carlos. But we need to work together to get out of here."

"Yeah, yeah. Of course. My bad. Come on, Doc, let's follow this ledge and see what's ahead."

The two men left their broken vehicle behind and began to descend into the gloom of the cavern. Around them, the walls glistened with dank moisture, and the air smelt of Grue.

"So okay. You entertain me, Doc. What is the Legendary Curse?"

"I thought you didn't believe in it."

"I don't believe in Bigfoot, but that doesn't mean I'll pass up the opportunity for a story about him fucking somebody's abuela."

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"Carlos, I don't understand. You're still your professor, and the one who maintains the currency of your fellowship."

"Oh tirate a un poso. Like I care anymore. Usted es la peor maestra del mundo. Everybody knows it. The only reason you're still head of the department is you got tenure through your cousin who is President of the Board. "Renowned expert..." Pah. You've been riding off the work of your graduate fellows for years, Doc."

Samuel paused and shook his head. "Okay. Perhaps you're right. I have taken some liberties in the use of my graduate students. And I'm sorry about that."

"I know about you and Mae Lin."

"What?"

"You heard me."

"Well. Whatever you think you know, it's irrelevant at this point. Let me tell you about the Curse."

"I'm all ears."

"They say that pirates once frequented this coast."

"Oh God."

"Just listen. And those pirates used the natural caverns below the island to excavate and create vast repositories for their stolen treasures. Something like a communal bank vault for the pirate community. This is well documented in a number of sources. But then, there are stories of a great sea creature. Some mythological beast. The Leviathan of the Old Testament. Supposedly it guarded these waters and brought death to all who attempted to access the caverns below. Very few lived to tell of a chance encounter with the beast. They say it was no natural creature, but one from the depths of Hell, bound by a curse to serve the pirate king in protection of the treasures. When all the pirates eventually were captured or killed, the stories continued for many years. Many men attempted to search for the lost treasures within the caverns... some

looked for the beast itself. None returned."

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"I Imm. You know, I don't think pirates have any fun, but it's a good story."

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The two had reached a opening in the rock and what lay beyond was stunning – a natural pool within a massive cavern. The pool's depth could not be ascertained, but the cavern itself was

large enough to conceal a small airliner. Carlos lifted a stone from the ground and hefted it into the pool.

"Hey, Carlos, look."

Samuel was kneeling beside a pair of fresh footprints near the water's edge.

"They're recent."

Chapter 4 by heureux-xx



"Ugh, I'm tired.." Carlos exclaimed with a huge sigh.

"Tired?" Samuel said with surprise. "I suppose we can take a small rest here, but time is of the essence!"

"No," Carlos replied, "I'm not physically tired. I'm tired.. Of you." An odd grin spreading across his face.

"Whatever are you talking about, Carlos?" Samuel asked, still examining the footprints.

"The only reason I came along, is because I was hoping to get a piece of that fine ass from Mae. But now that she's likely dead. And you've probably led me to my grave. I think it's time I bid you adieu." And without a moments hesitation, Carlos lifted the machete and brought it down on Samuel as hard as possible, almost cutting cleaning through his entire neck. Instantly killing him.

"Bitch." Carlos said to himself, almost as a 'last word' to tell Samuel how it is.

"This treasure is mine..." And Carlos walked off, following the trail led by the footprint.

Chapter 5 by intellikat



Dr. Islington stifled a cough.

"Mae Lin," he called hoarsely into the dim light of the cavern.

Moments later, the lithe yet athletic girl ducked and slipped back into the cavern via a duct that had been channelled out of the cave. The cave's inhabitants could do nothing to

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bring colour back to Izzy's face as she knelt by his side and dipped her bandana into the cool stream water to cool his forehead. She smiled at him and he smiled back weakly.

Half a day ago he was jaunting along with Mae Lin beside him in their Jeep, regaling her with tales of yore and such. It was a stereotype, yet true, that wizened old codgers such as he and Samuel Wilde loved to prey upon their assistants, wooing them with stories half-true and half-concocted of Bigfoot sightings, pinning grey aliens to the earth in New Mexico, inhaling swamp gasses and such... and they LOVED IT. Yes, they did. A stereotype as well, yet equally true... within each intelligent, independent, and self-confident young woman climbing her way up the north face of a career existed a giggling and rambunctious young girl who longed to giggle and play-slap following a mojito or two with an elderly professor such as he in the privacy of his post-modern ranch home.

And it was how one climbed in this sexist, man's world wasn't it? It was how one swam in this academic pond full of scum and half-bloated frogs with PhDs without being dragged to the bottom by some collegial snapping-turtle full of spite. And it was how Mae Lin had manoeuvred her position at the university under Dr. Wilde, and beside that fool Carlos "Dirty" Sanchez. Samuel Wilde was not a fool himself, but without the aid of youthful minds of she and Carlos, he would not be where he was today.

The crumpled wreck of the Jeep was nearby, and Mae Lin moved toward it to search for some more food and bottled water.

"Mae... leave me. Find a way out of this cavern."

"Shhh, Izzy."

"You go. Without me."

This was, of course, Mae Lin's plan all along but she felt some duty in refusing his offer a few times first.

"We'll get you out of here."

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"No, I'm finished. My spleen is broken and my arm is broken. I'll reveal his belly, covered with bloody marks."

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"Oh, shit, Izzy. That is bad."

"Listen to me, Mae. This cavern... it's not natural. It is CURSED. I knew it. Samuel knew it. I called him here and he dragged the two of you into this messy business because of my greed. This is all my fault." He coughed blood and wheezed wheezily. "Get out while you can. Our supplies are gone, vehicles wrecked... and now the BEAST has brought us here for god-knows-what."

"Beast? What beast? You are delirious, Izzy. Stop talking."

"No, Mae, no. It is true. All true." He drew a small leather Moleskine(tm) notebook from his bloodiest vest pocket after unzipping it fumblingly. "All of my notes are contained with here. The entire story of this cavern and both the treasures and perils it holds. Read it well, my dear." His eyes glazed over and he began to caress the classy notebook. "Ah, Moleskine(tm). The Legendary Notebook. Are you familiar with the tale of Moleskine(tm), Mae?"

Mae frowned. "Umm. well. I know it's a great gift for a hipster."

"It all started many years ago," said Izzy, seeming to gain strength with every word. "With a pocket-sized black object, the product of a great tradition. The Moleskine(tm) notebook is, in fact, the heir and successor to the legendary notebook used by artists and thinkers over the past two centuries: among them Vincent van Gogh, Pablo Picasso, Ernest Hemingway, and Bruce Chatwin. A simple black rectangle with rounded corners, an elastic page-holder, and an internal expandable pocket: a nameless object with a spare perfection all its own, produced for over a century by a small French bookbinder that supplied the stationery shops of Paris, where the artistic and literary avant-gardes of the world browsed and bought them. A trusted and handy travel companion, the notebook held invaluable sketches, notes, stories, and ideas that would one day become famous paintings or the pages of beloved books."

"Yeah, okay..."

"The notebook was Bruce Chatwin's favorite, and it was he who called it 'moleskine.' In the mid-

1980s, these notebooks became increasingly scarce and then vanished entirely. In his book

The Songlines, Chatwin tells the story of how he found the notebook in 1986, the manufacturer, a small family-owned company in the French Alps, was out of business. Several

moleskine nest plus are left. The owner of the stationery shop in the Rue de la

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Chatwin set about buying up all the notebooks that he could find before his departure for Australia, but there were still not enough."

"Goddamn, Izzy. Take a rest. We can review this later, okay?"

He continued. "In 1997, a small Milanese publisher brought the legendary notebook back to life, and selected this name with a literary pedigree to revive an extraordinary tradition. Following in Chatwin's footsteps, Moleskine(tm) notebooks have resumed their travels, providing an indispensable counterpart to the new and portable technology of today. Capturing reality in movement, glimpsing and recording details, inscribing the unique nature of experience on paper: the Moleskine(tm) notebook becomes a battery that stores ideas and feelings, releasing its energy over time."

"Is this information in any way important in relation to our escaping this cavern?"

"Today, Moleskine(tm) brand is synonymous with culture, travel, memory, imagination, and personal identity--in both the real world and the digital world. It is a brand that encompasses a family of nomadic objects: notebooks, diaries, journals, bags, writing instruments and reading accessories, dedicated to our mobile identity. Objects that follow us everywhere we go and identify us wherever we are in the world. Moleskine(tm) objects are partners for the creative and imaginative professions of our time. They represent, around the world, a symbol of contemporary nomadism."

And with that, Dr. Islington's eyes rolled, his tongue flopped, and he died. The tiny Moleskine(tm) notebook dropped from his hand onto the cavern floor, opening to a page which held a sketch of a strange and terrifying beast, with all weak points noted in red ink.

Mae Lin lifted the notebook and took a deep breath.

Chapter 6 by intellikat



Carlos made his way along a stone ledge that spanned the watery pool, machete, shovel, and

propane tank in hand. It was difficult to balance, but he had learned from many Xbox and PS3 games that it was important to not See more of Story Wars was interested in beating a level boss.

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The trail of footprints he was following had disappeared oddly at the water's edge, but Carlos was expecting it to reappear on the other side, where in the dim light he saw something very familiar.

The wreckage of Mae Lin and Izzy's Jeep.

Carlos picked his way through the twisted metal, looking for anything that might be useful, and then saw the lifeless body of Dr. Islington propped up against the other side of the Jeep.

"Hey. Doctor Izod. Izzy Bizzy. You awake?"

Carlos prodded the body with his shovel. It slumped over to one side and onto the ground.

"Guess not..."

Carlos moved around to the other side of the Jeep and noticed a pair of footprints leading into a rocky duct leading away from the cavern. He knelt in the sand and peered at the boot pattern.

"Mae Lin..." he mouthed, and looked to the right where another set of footprints appeared from the pool. "What the fu--" He trailed off as he watched the prints appear to follow Mae Lin's into the duct. Silently, he counted off himself, Mae Lin, and the two now-dead doctors. "That means we've got an uninvited guest," he said, hefting the machete and stalking toward the entrance of the duct, "and three's fuckin' company, bitch." Carlos spat into the sand and disappeared into the dark and dank passageway.

Chapter 7 by intellikat



It was at this moment that from the depths of the cavern pool, still and silent from the beginning to this, a column of bubbles rose and broke on the glistening surface.

At first, it looked only as if some submerged debris had dislodged itself and released a trapped package of air, but in the next moment the bubbles continued, larger and faster still until a congregated mass of them was disturbing a circle about the size of a vintage Volkswagen Golf

Although no one was there to witness it, a large orange shape broke the surface and rose above the flat of the pool, its light reflecting off the water and illuminating the rocky walls with some of the same orange light that had been at once illuminating the pool and casting the shadows on its own surface.

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The shape was identical to that sketched into the Moleskine(tm) notebook of the late Dr. Islington, which Mae Lin now clutched tightly in her yellow-tan hand. She turned in the duct, hearing something strange behind her.

"Hello?" she called out in the dark, and lifted her Samsung Galaxy S7 Edge to illuminate the space.

Light flared from the Korean mobile phone and Mae Lin screamed, seeing the lanky figure stalking her from the rear. Her phone tumbled from hand.

Somewhere further back in the duct, Carlos heard the scream and broke into a sandy trot, recognizing the sound from the many times he had played tricks on Mae Lin back in the lab at PSU. The machete, shovel, and propane tank were still clumsily held as he cursed in a low voice.

When he reached the place where Mae Lin's mobile phone lay, shining its light against the ceiling above, he cried out in a shrill voice.

"Mae! Mae! It's Carlos! Donde estas? Where are you?"

From the depths beyond, the sounds of more screams and something more guttural came. Carlos dropped the shovel and propane tank, but lifted the mobile phone and held the machete firmly in the other hand. He sprinted down the passageway, skipping along the rocks on the floor below.

Suddenly, the duct opened into what appeared a larger expanse, and Carlos saw his Asian colleague pinned and wrestling with a dark figure above her. The figure was dressed in a long overcoat, tall boots, and a broad-rimmed hat.

"Hilo de puta!" screamed Carlos, rushing directly at the figure and raising his machete.

The figure turned, its single eye unobscured by eyepatch widening as the machete came down and buried itself somewhere between shoulder and neck.

The figure screamed, breaking free of Carlos' grasp and falling to one side. Carlos lifted the blade again, but Mae Lin shouted out.

"Not Carlos! Wait! Don't!"

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Carlos paused, the blade held high.

"He could be our only chance of escape, Carlos!"

Carlos lowered the blade and moved beside the now-wheezing figure, who was bleeding out on the ground from the nasty gash in his back.

"Who are you, motherfucker?!" spat Carlos.

"You'll never escape," groaned the figure. "The creature brought you here, and that means you're now his."

Carlos took a moment to survey the appearance of the downed man, noticing he was dressed as a pirate.

"Chingate, pinche idiota. I said... who are you? Motherfucker?" Carlos said again, placing his foot on the figure's upper arm, nearest the wound. The pressure elicited a terrible shriek from the man.

"Captain Delgado, of the Portuguese Galleon São João Babaca."

Mae Lin had moved toward the man and was removing a large compression bandage from her side-pouch.

"Don't help this cabron till he says why he attacked you," said Carlos.

The figure looked over at Mae Lin and then back at Carlos.

"Oh, come on, now. Like you need me to answer that question." Captain Delgado winked at Carlos.

"You fucking manioso. I should cut your balls off right now."

"I've been trapped below the earth for hundreds of years," pleaded the Captain. "Please excuse my urges!"

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"What is this creature you

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The Captain wheezed and looked once more at Mae Lin's side-pouch.

"Okay," Carlos nodded. "Patch this fucker up."

Mae Lin helped the man up to sitting and began to remove the bloody coat from his body.

"When we built this system of passageways connecting the caverns--"

"We??"

"The Pirate Consortium."

"Oh. Okay, the Pirate Consortium. Go ahead. Continue."

"We didn't realize what we had unearthed. A creature from ancient times. Before recorded history. When massive beasts roamed the planet."

"Are you talking about dinosaurs?" asked Mae Lin.

"I don't know," said the man. "I'm a pirate."

"Fucking continue, man," said Carlos. "Qué chingados!"

"This ancient beast had been trapped below ground somehow. It and others of its kind. These caverns are connected by underwater channels that must have reached the sea at one point in history. They span for hundreds of miles below the rock. But at some point, the creatures were trapped. They survived somehow below. Taking sustenance from creatures unlucky enough to venture below. Humans, in time."

Captain Delgado sighed.

"My whole crew. Vanished. Eaten alive by the beast."

"Why didn't you just return to the surface?" asked Mae Lin.

"This creature has some kind of power. As if from all those years beneath the earth, it is able to call out to the rock. Open places. See more of Story Wars use others. That must be how you got here."

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Mae Lin and Carlos looked at one another.

"How is it you are still alive after hundreds of years?" asked Mae Lin.

The Captain's eyes shifted back and forth. "It's... it's not something you would believe if I told you."

"Well then. What about the treasure?" Carlos asked.

The Captain frowned. "Treasure? What treasure?"

"This 'Pirate Consortium.' You were digging this place out to be some kind of community bank, right?" Carlos look dover at Mae Lin. "Samuel told me about it."

"I don't know what you are talking about," said Delgado. "I can assure you there is no--"

Carlos applied pressure once again to the arm, and the pirate screamed out in burning anguish.

"Okay! Okay! Fi de rapariga! The treasure. Please. The treasure and the secret to my longevity... my long life are one and the same. As well as to the creature's great strength and powers, I believe."

"What is it?"

"These waters are sacred. There is one pool, at the heart of this place, where a glowing moss grows on the rocks surrounding. If you drink from its healing waters, you will live forever. Not to die a natural death at least."

Mae Lin and Carlos looked at one another.

"It is the treasure that we hid. It is the lifeblood of our... of our organization. Our society. It just remain hidden."

"Society? What society?"

"The Brotherhood of Ancients. Perhaps you know us by one of many other names. In more recent times, a man by the name of John D. Rockefeller... unify us. We are those who have determined the course of human history!"

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Carlos brought the machete down on the head of Captain Delgado and Mae Lin screamed out in horror.

"Carlos! What have you done!"

"Se cago en la leche, bro. I'm sick of this bullshit, Mae. If it's true, we'll dump his body in this magic pool. If not... no big loss. But we're wasting time and plot progression sitting here listening to this fucking joker. Especially in the second to last chapter."

Suddenly, as if to progress the plot as Carlos had enjoined, a bellowing cry emanated from the direction of the passageway's entrance.

"What the fu--" mouthed Carlos.

The room began to shake, and a crack in the ceiling above began to widen.

"Mae Lin!" shouted Carlos, "Hurry! Take off your clothes!"

Chapter 8 by intellikat



Mae Lin began to strip her top off above her head, revealing a light blue sports bra soaked with sweat.

Suddenly, a creature the size of two Land Rovers mating crashed through the wall of the room.

Carlos jerked awake, his head banging against the window of the 1997 Jeep Wrangler.

Samuel looked over from the driver's seat, staring at his younger assistant.

"The fu--" Carlos mouthed, rubbing his head.

"You've been asleep most of the night, Carlos. Rain hasn't let up."

"Que hora es? What time..?"

"It's 5 am. Do you know where your illegitimate children are?" Samuel chuckled and lit up a hand-rolled joint. After a deep inhale, he blew a thick cloud of smoke from the half-open window.

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"Hey Doc, you shouldn't smoke in the car. It's bad for the engine."

Samuel handed the cigarette to Carlos, who took a hit.

"Another star," said Samuel, pointing toward a bright trace crossing the dark sky above. "You fade away..."

Carlos tried to remember the dream he had just had as it began to fade away. "Mae Lin... Where are you now? Was it all in my fantasy? Where are you now? Were you only imaginary?" he mused.

"So... Carlos. You've probably guessed by now this isn't purely a university-sponsored research trip."

"Yeah, no shit, Doc. Maybe it was the giant fissure that opened up in the ground that tipped me off. What the fuck are we chasing here?"

"Atlantis," said Samuel, coldly. "Under the sea. I believe that Izzy... Dr. Islington has found an entry to that fabled city. Or at least he believes so."

Carlos remembered snatches of his dream in moments... a pirate, a monster, murders below ground... Mae Lin stripping. All things Carlos liked.

"But now we've lost contact. And I don't know whether we should return to town in search of help or wait. They did have a working handheld radio in their Jeep, as we do. I'm hoping they are able to make contact with us."

As if in response, there was a crackling over the Jeep's CB radio, and Carlos grabbed the handset before Samuel could. The two men shot dirty looks at one another, and then Carlos spoke.

"Walker One to Walker Two, are you reading me? Over."

There was a crackling again, and then the distinct voice of Mae Lin cut across the line.

"These shallow waters never met what I needed. I'm letting go... a deeper dive. Eternal silence of the sea. I'm breathing alive."

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"Mae Lin, is that you? It's Carlos."

"Atlantis."

Samuel grabbed the CB from Carlos' hand.

"Under the sea?" he called.

"Under the sea."

"Where are you now?"

"Another dream..." Carlos said silently to himself.

"The monster's running wild inside of me," came Mae Lin's voice again. "I'm faded. I'm faded. So lost, I'm faded. I'm faded. So lost, I'm faded."

Mae Lin's voice trickled off, like the sound of a YouTube music video having reached its conclusion, and Carlos flicked the smoldering nub of the joint toward the back of the Jeep and the propane tank (which had a leak that neither men knew about). In the next moment, the Jeep erupted in a giant ball of flame, ending the tale but ushering in a subconscious desire on the part of the reader to listen to a particular electronic song on YouTube.

the end

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